

Life Along the Sweetwater River

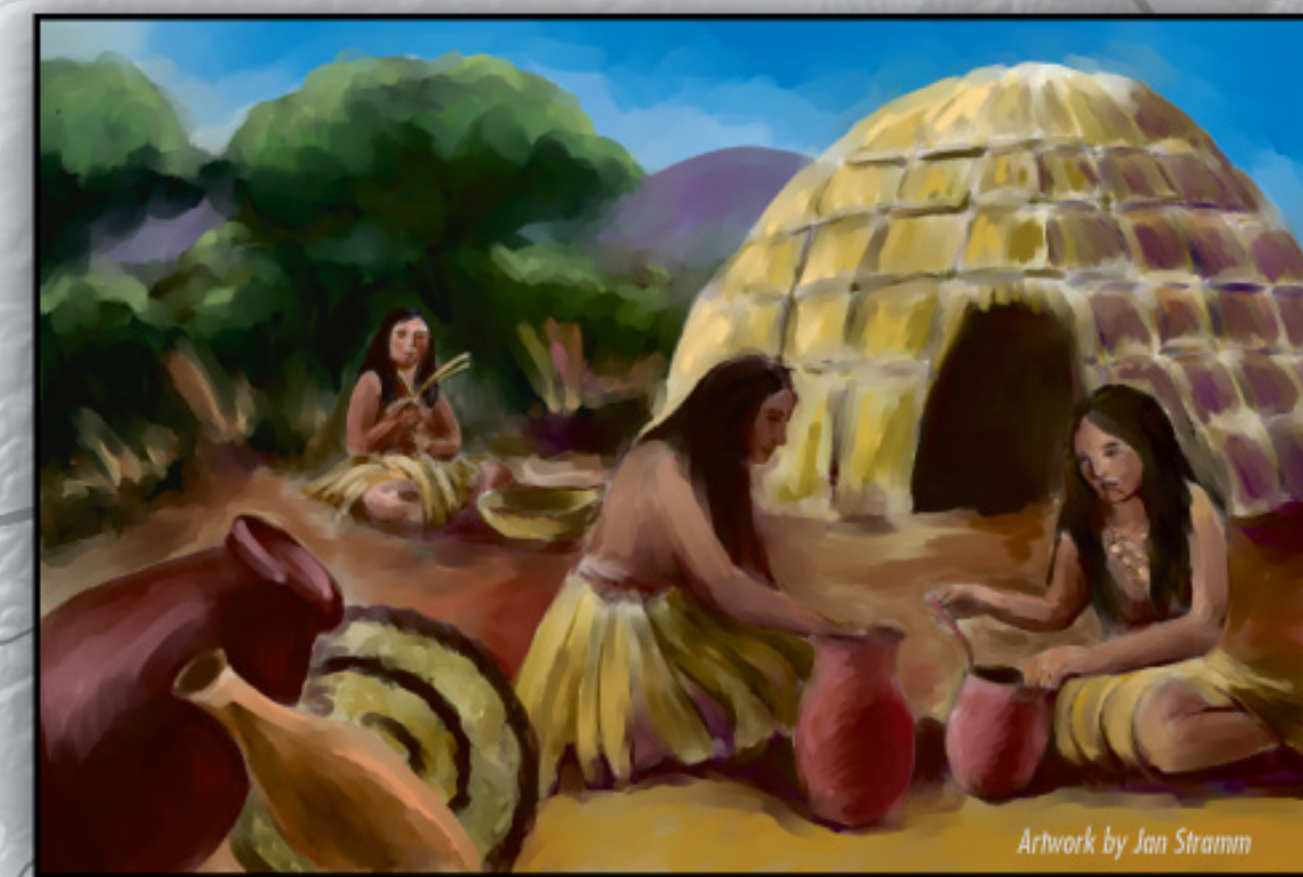
NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Water from melting snow, mountain springs and rivulets of rain merge on the western slopes of the Cuyamaca Mountains in eastern San Diego County to form the headwaters of the Sweetwater River. This is the start of a journey that ends 60 miles to the west in San Diego Bay.



Cuyamaca Peak, elev. 5,993 ft.

The availability of water makes the watershed a zone of abundant life, not only for plants and animals but people as well. The Kumeyaay called the river Ah-ha-Coo-Muik. Villages were located along the river as they moved between the oak rich mountains to the varied resources of the coastal area.



Artwork by Jan Strawn

- 1 Pu-shuyi
 - 2 Hamacha
 - 3 Sekwan
 - 4 Kwatai
 - 5 Ekwiamak
- Villages are approximate



The Green Valley Falls in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park is just below the beginning of the Sweetwater River.

- Vegetation Category**
- Forest
 - Woodland
 - Scrub and Chaparral
 - Grasslands, Vernal Pools, Meadows, and Other Herb Communities
 - Non-Native Vegetation, Developed Areas, or Unvegetated Habitat
 - Riparian and Bottomland Habitat
 - Bog and Marsh
 - Sweetwater Watershed Boundary
 - Lake
 - Sweetwater Regional Park
 - Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Boundary
 - Interstate
 - Highway
 - Road
 - Major Stream
 - Minor Stream

Pacific Ocean



Photo provided by Corporal Institute

Periodically, fires will race through these plant communities but within a few years, the vegetation will recover and wait for the next cycle of fire.

Native vegetation along the river provides habitat for a variety of wildlife and prevents erosion and siltation. Pine and oak at higher elevations give way to hillsides of dense chaparral. Lush riparian woodlands line the banks of streams and the river. A marsh forms where the river meets the bay.



Photo provided by Corporal Institute